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Circle of Security Parenting aims to enhance healthy attachment and health brains.



This presentation will cover a brief overview of:

- Brain Development
- Trauma Theory
- Attachment Theory
- Trauma and its impact on children
- Circle of Security - Parenting
Intervention Program

Brain Development

Utero to 4 years :

develops and organises to reflect its environment in a “use dependent way”

Therefore:

Early life experiences determine how genetic potential is expressed or not.

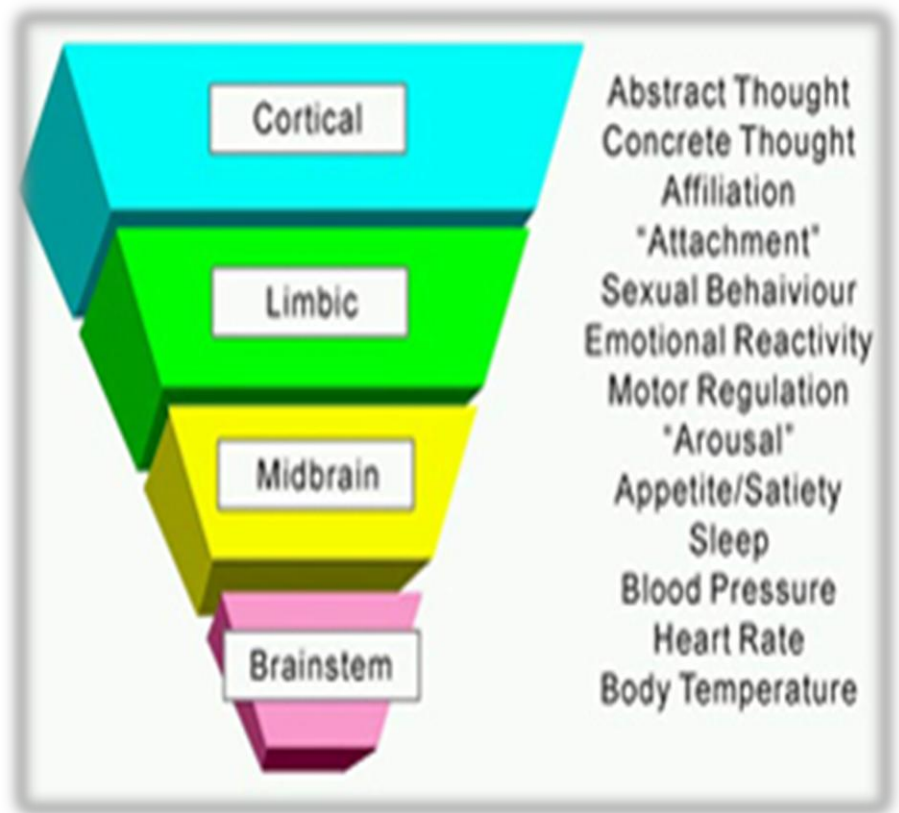
Neuroscientists can now identify:

patterns in brain activity associated with some negative early life experiences

Important: If vulnerability is identified then we can develop interventions to affect positive change

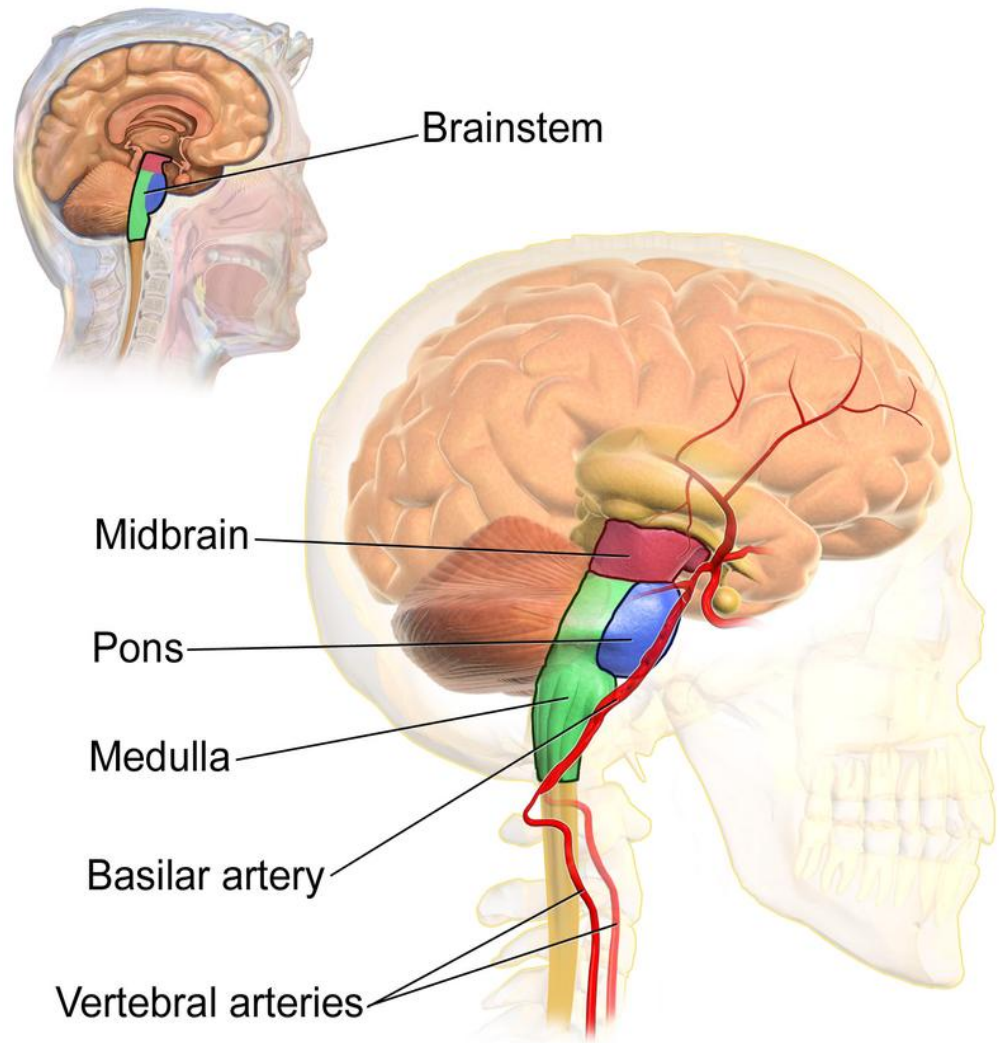
The brain develops vertically and sequentially over time

- The Brain is responsible for everything we do e.g. talking, walking, feelings etc.
- It is a complex structure of continuous activity made up of one hundred billion nerve cells
- Every person's brain is a reflection of their experiences.
- In development the brain organises from bottom to top:



Structure of Brainstem

Brainstem
is where the
spinal cord
merges into
the brain

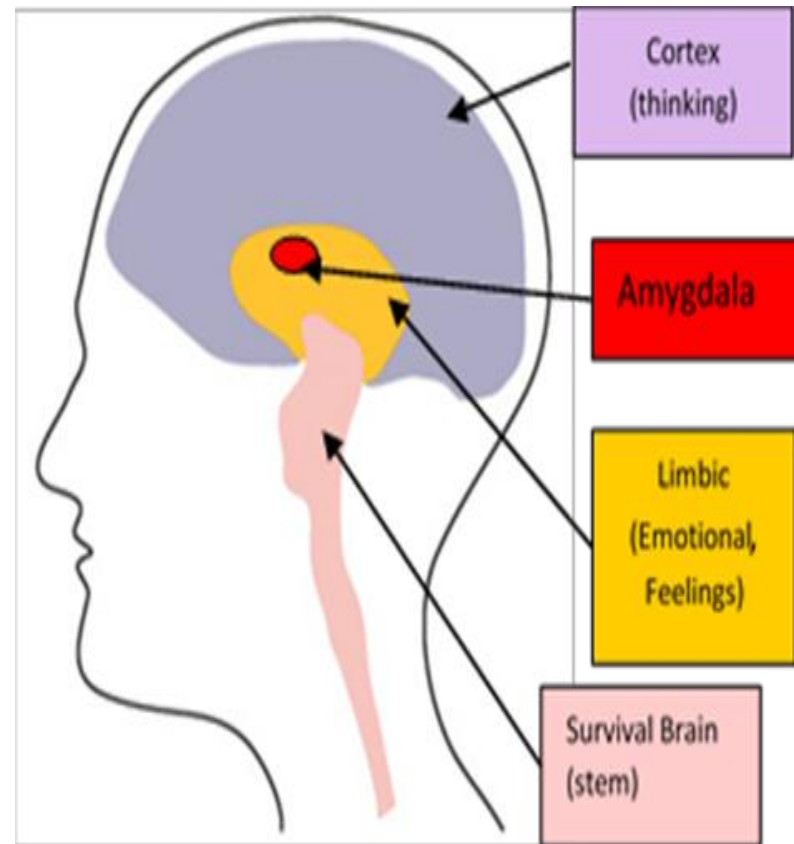


Midbrain

- **Midbrain** develops during the first and second years of life.

Portion of CNS that interprets sensory information

- Pons acts as a relay station
- Medulla (Oblongata) controls a number of body functions, such as heartbeat rate and digestion.



Limbic System

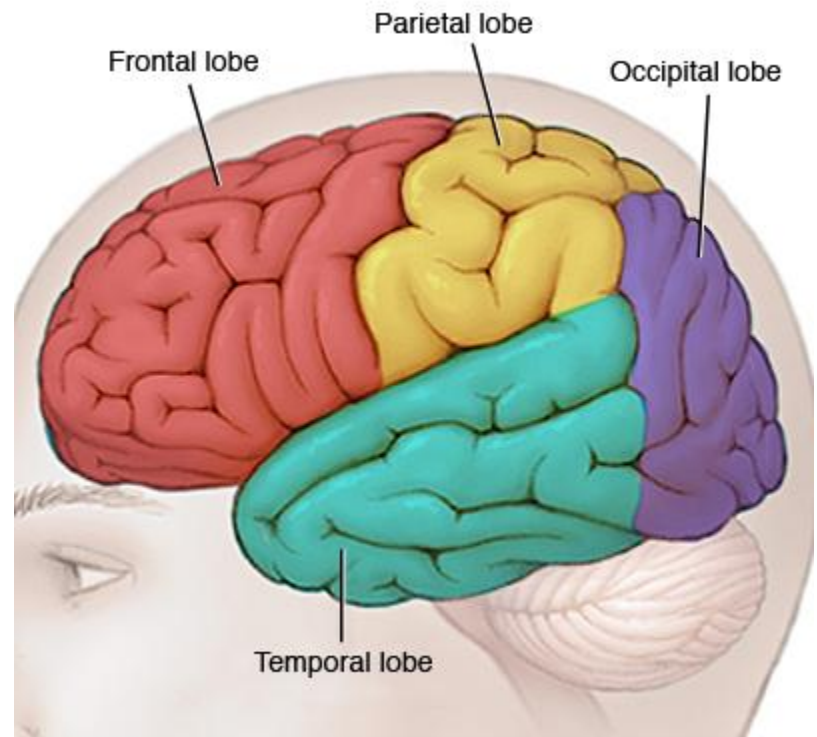
- form between 1-4 years of age
- emotional life is largely stored in the limbic system
- it has a great deal to do with formation of memories

- hypothalamus regulating the release of cortisol and other stress hormones
- amygdala evaluates threats and triggers the body's stress response

Cortex

The ridges (gyri) and grooves (sulci) are divided into smaller units referred to as lobes:

- Frontal - memory, abstract thinking, planning, impulse control;
- Parietal - body sensations – heat, cold, pressure, pain;
- Temporal - hearing, language skills, social understanding; and
- Occipital - control vision.



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Neurons and Synapses

- Form the wiring of the brain.
- Neurons (network of specialised nerve cells) communicate with one another using electrical and chemical signals.

They are the physical basis of learning and memory.

- Messages are passed between neurons at connections called synapses (microscopic gap called synaptic cleft).
- In the first 3 years, a child's brain has up to twice as many synapses as it will have in adulthood.

Brown, T.T., & Jernigan, T.L. (2012)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9IJkws>

Blooming and Pruning

- Blooming: Genes allow the brain to fine-tune itself according to the input it receives from the environment. Greater input stimulates neural regions and repeated use strengthens a synapse.
- Pruning: Synapses that are rarely used are weakens and eliminated.

Genes provide the blue print for the brain, but the child's environment and experiences carry out the construction'.

By the end of the third year of a child's life, the brain has reached 90% of adult size

(urbanchildinstitute.org).

Trauma and its impact on children/young people



“Traumatisation occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat.” van der Kolk, 1989

According to trauma theory:



“Interpersonal traumas are likely to have more profound effects than impersonal ones”

– especially ‘betrayal of trust’ by a significant other.

van der Kolk (2005)

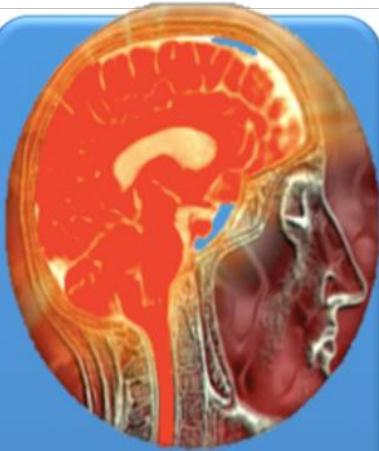
Toxic stress response

Occurs when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity, such as:

- physical or emotional abuse,
- chronic neglect,
- caregiver substance abuse or mental illness,
- exposure to violence, and/or
- the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship,

without adequate adult support.

Trauma alters the brain



Hypersensitivity
to even minor
threat



Extremist
thinking



Respond to
many things
as threat to
life –
aggression
and impulse
control



Attention to
threat while
ignoring less
threatening,
but
important
information



Trauma Response Patterns

Adaptive Response	REST	VIGILANCE	FREEZE	FLIGHT	FIGHT
Predictable De-escalating Behaviors <i>(behaviors of the adult when a child is in various states of arousal)</i>	Presence Quiet Rocking	Quiet voice Eye contact Confidence Clear simple directives	Slow sure physical touch "Invited" touch Quiet melodic words Singing, humming music	Presence Quiet Confidence Disengage	Appropriate physical restraint Withdraw from class TIME!
Predictable Escalating Behaviors <i>(behaviors of the adult when a child is in various states of arousal)</i>	Talking Poking Noise Television	Frustration, anxiety Communicate from distance without eye contact Complex, compound directives Ultimatums	Raised voice Raised hand Shaking finger Tone of voice, yelling, threats Chaos in class	Increased or continued frustration More yelling Chaos Sense of fear	Inappropriate physical restraint Grabbing Shaking Screaming
Regulating Brain Region	NEOCORTEX	CORTEX	LIMBIC	MIDBRAIN	BRAIN STEM
Cognition	ABSTRACT	CONCRETE	EMOTIONAL	REACTIVE	REFLEXIVE
STATE www.childtrauma.com	CALM	AROUSAL	ALARM	FEAR	TERROR

A traumatic experience impacts the entire person – the way we think, the way we learn, the way we remember things, the way we feel about ourselves, the way we feel about other people, and the way we make sense of the world...

- Sandra Bloom, M.D. (2014)

Traumatic experiences are often remembered as images that are isolated, bodily sensations, sounds and smells.



- # Behaviour should be read as means of expressing emotional states, rather
- than as an intentional occurrence.



Think about what has happened to the child in relation to:

- environment,
- care,
- experience,
- stimulation,
- nurture,
- attachment,
- treatment or lack of it.

Because, this has informed how their brain is organised.

Also consider how the child's life in the following areas is affected as a result of complex trauma:

- Memory
- Health
- Education
- Relationships
- Identity
- Self-care skills
- Behaviour

And what would it look like?

On a brighter note, research also indicates that supportive, responsive relationships with caring adults as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress response.

With the right supports in place people can heal from those experiences.

Source: Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

Activity

Think back to a time when you were confronted with a fear or phobia

- What happened?
- What do you remember?
- How were your senses affected?

Then imagine you were in this state for the majority of your day.

How would you function?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bF3j5UVCSCA>

Table 3: Primary substantiated harm types in Australian states and territories, 2015-16

Harm Type	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Australia
Emotional Abuse	5961	9133	2123	1558	414	376	225	549	20339
Neglect	5677	583	2217	1168	691	255	136	676	11403
Physical Abuse	2776	2975	1014	750	383	104	64	295	8361
Sexual Abuse	2868	1463	267	696	152	35	24	54	5559
Not Stated	0	0	0	26	1	25	0	0	52
Total	17282	14154	5621	4198	1641	795	449	1574	45714

Notes: (a) The definition of emotional abuse in WA has been broadened to include children witnessing family violence from 2015-16. (b) In the Northern Territory, due to recording issues, sexual exploitation is under-reported. This has now been addressed, and it is expected that numbers in this area will be similar to those of other jurisdictions in future years. Source: AIHW (2017b, Table S8)

Attachment Theory

Definition of Attachment

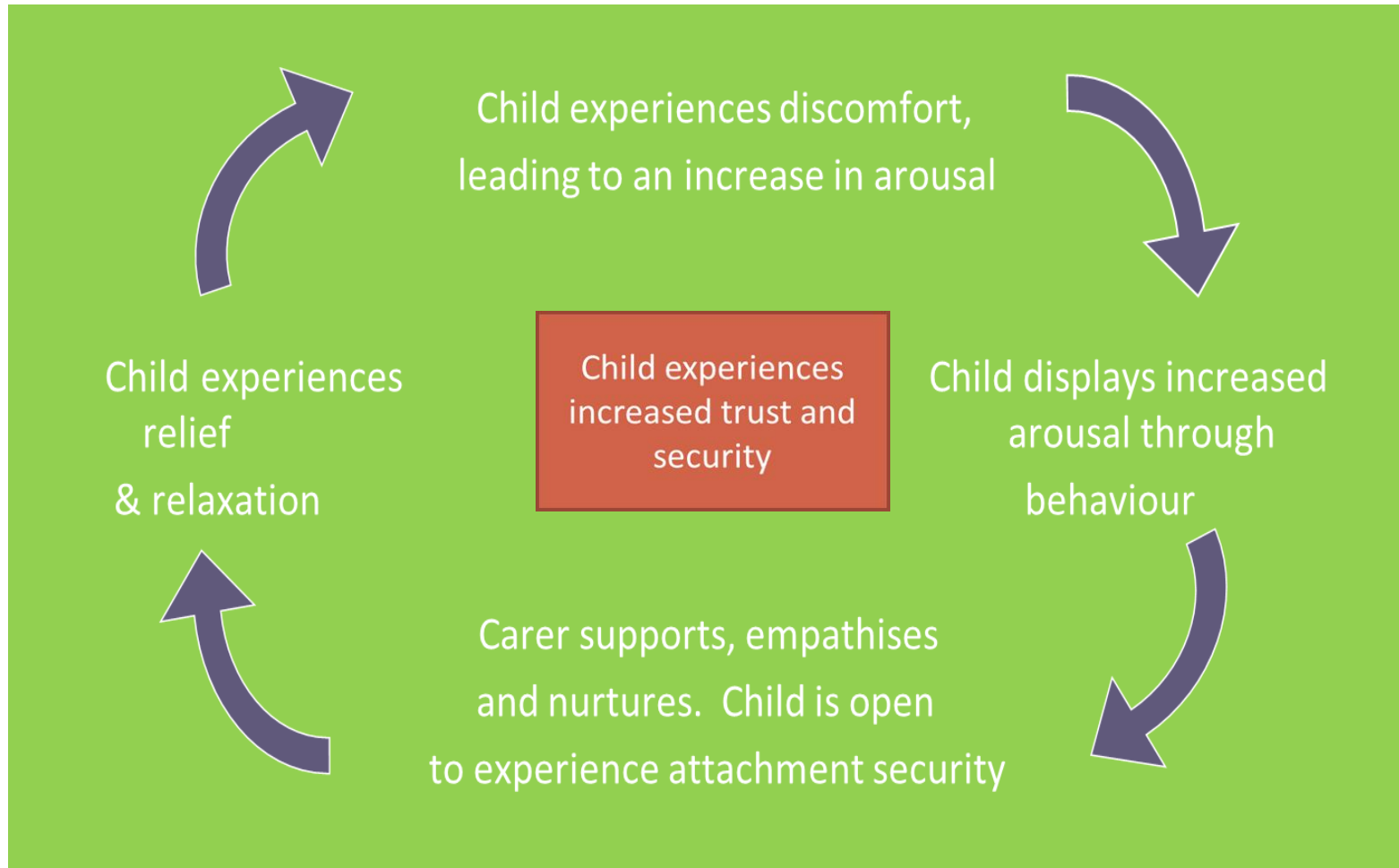
Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space.

(Ainsworth & Bell, 1970, Bowlby, 1969)

- *Human attachment is first seen in the bonds a child forms with primary caregivers, it does not have to be learnt (it is innate).*
- *Attachment is a powerful universal need in humans.*
- *Attachment fosters achievement, autonomy, and selflessness.*

Brendtro et al. (1990)

Attachment Cycle

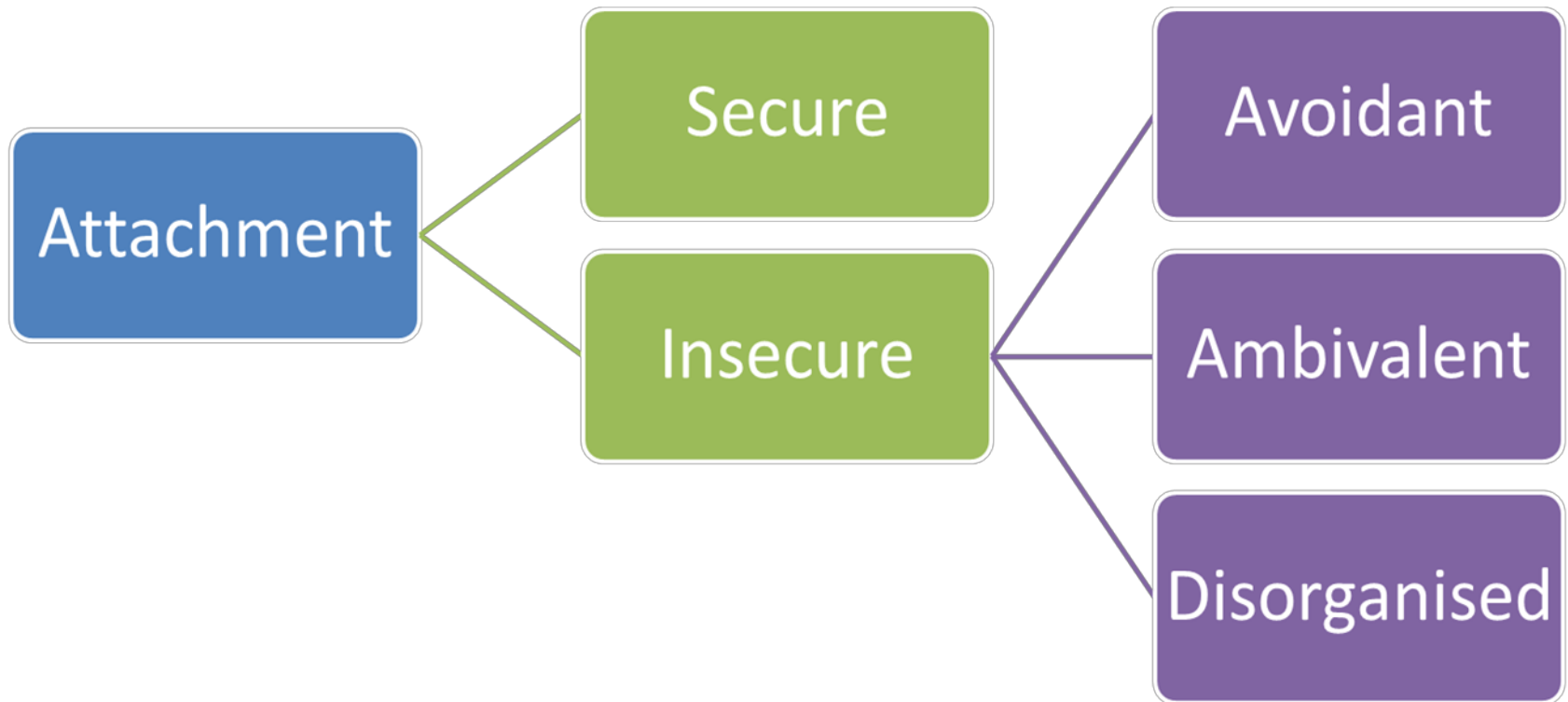


Four stages of attachment development :

- pre-attachment phase (birth to 6-8 weeks);
- attachment-in-making phase (6-8 weeks to 6-8 months);
- attachment phase (6-8 months to 18 months, and up to 3 years);
- formation of a reciprocal relationship phase (18 months to 2-3 years onwards).

Bowlby, J. (1969)

Attachment Types



Ainsworth & Bell, 1970

Characteristics of Secure Attachment

As Children:

- » Are able to separate from parent
- » Seek comfort from parents when frightened
- » Greets return of parents with positive emotions
- » Prefers parents to strangers

As Adults:

- » Have trusting, lasting relationships
- » Tend to have high self-esteem
- » Are comfortable sharing feelings with friends and partners
- » Seek out social support

Characteristics of Avoidant Attachment

As Children:

- » May avoid parents
- » Does not seek much contact or comfort from parents
- » Shows little or no preference for parents over strangers

As Adults:

- » May have problems with intimacy
- » Invest little emotion in social and romantic relationships
- » Unwilling or unable to share thoughts and feelings with others

Characteristics of Ambivalent Attachment

As Children:

- » May be wary of strangers
- » Become greatly distressed when parents leave
- » Do not appear to be comforted when parents return

As Adults:

- » Reluctant to become close to others
- » Worry that their partner does not love them
- » Become very distraught when relationships end

Characteristics of Disorganized Attachment

At Age 1:

- » Show a mixture of avoidant and resistant behaviors
- » May seem dazed, confused, or apprehensive

At Age 6:

- » May take on a parental role
- » Some children act as a caregiver toward the parent

Features of a secure attachment are:

- Reciprocity
- Responsivity
- Attunement
- Break and Repair

Ainsworth & Bell, 1970

Insecure Attachment

- Attachment trauma has the ability to affect every caring and intimate relationship for the rest of a child's life.
- When a child experiences a carer as neglectful, unavailable, unpredictable, rejecting or a source of pain and terror, an insecure attachment develops.

Ainsworth & Bell, 1970

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AB51V3fAAvs>

Regulation

- Babies look to their carer to learn how to react in new situations.
- A baby's experience is understood and regulated by the carer.
- Infants learn how to recover from stressful situations from their carer.

Ainsworth & Bell, 1970



<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Joseph+Campos+Visual+Cliff+Experiment&&view=detail&mid=AFD78EB3EDCE80D47F49AFD78EB3EDCE80D47F49&FORM=VRDGAR>

Internal working model



- The child's attachment relationship with their primary caregiver leads to the development of an internal working model, which involves mental representations for understanding the world, self and others.
- Our early experiences become our 'internal working model'.

(Bretherton, & Munholland, 1999).

Connecting

- Both physical and emotional safety are the first step in healing past trauma.
- Reliability and Predictability are key principles to enable this learning and trust to build.
- Adults need to be repeating the same message both in words as well as actions over and over again.

Counter Intuitive Parenting

- Counter Intuitive Parenting means to base the carer's interactions with the child or young person on their attachment needs and internal working model, rather than reacting to the behaviour.

Hughes & Baylin, 2012.

- A trauma informed culture/background is very important when thinking about insecure attachment, as there has to be a very strong rupture in the relationship between the parent and child in order for an insecure attachment to be formed.

Hughes & Baylin, 2012.

Therapeutic Parenting



Clinical application of Attachment Theory: The Circle of Security approach

- Circle of Security (COS) was developed by *Glen Cooper, Kent Hoffman, Bob Marvin and Bert Powell*.
- The below listed article provides a brief history of the Research and Development of COS Interventions:
Hoffman, K., Marvin, R., Cooper, G. & Powell, B. (2006). Changing toddlers' and preschoolers' attachment classifications: The Circle of Security Intervention. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74, 1017-1026.

Short summary of research findings

A DIFFERENCE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

***50 YEARS OF RESEARCH HAVE SHOWN THAT CHILDREN
THAT ARE MORE SECURELY ATTACHED :***

- ✓ Enjoy more happiness with their parents
- ✓ Feel less anger at their parents
- ✓ Get along better with friends
- ✓ Have stronger friendships
- ✓ Are able solve problems with friends
- ✓ Have better relationships with brothers and sisters
- ✓ Have higher self-esteem
- ✓ Know that most problems will have an answer
- ✓ Trust that good things will come their way
- ✓ Trust the people they love
- ✓ Know how to be kind to those around them

Circle of Security Parenting

The eight modules comprise:

- Welcome to Circle of Security Parenting
- Exploring Our Children's Needs All the Way Around the Circle
- "Being With" on the Circle
- "Being With" Infants on the Circle
- The Path to Security
- Exploring Our Struggles
- Rupture and Repair in Relationships.

Module 1: Welcome to Circle of Security Parenting:



Goals:

- Help parents see 'what is hidden in plain sight'.
- 'Good enough' parenting.
- Security is about learning from our mistakes as parents.
- It is never too late to learn new ways of parenting.
- Children are the instruction manual.
- Organise automatic caregiving behaviours with language.

Activity:

- What shoe did you put on first this morning?
- Did you ask yourself which shoe to put on first?
- How did you learn to do it that way?
- Have you ever thought about this before?



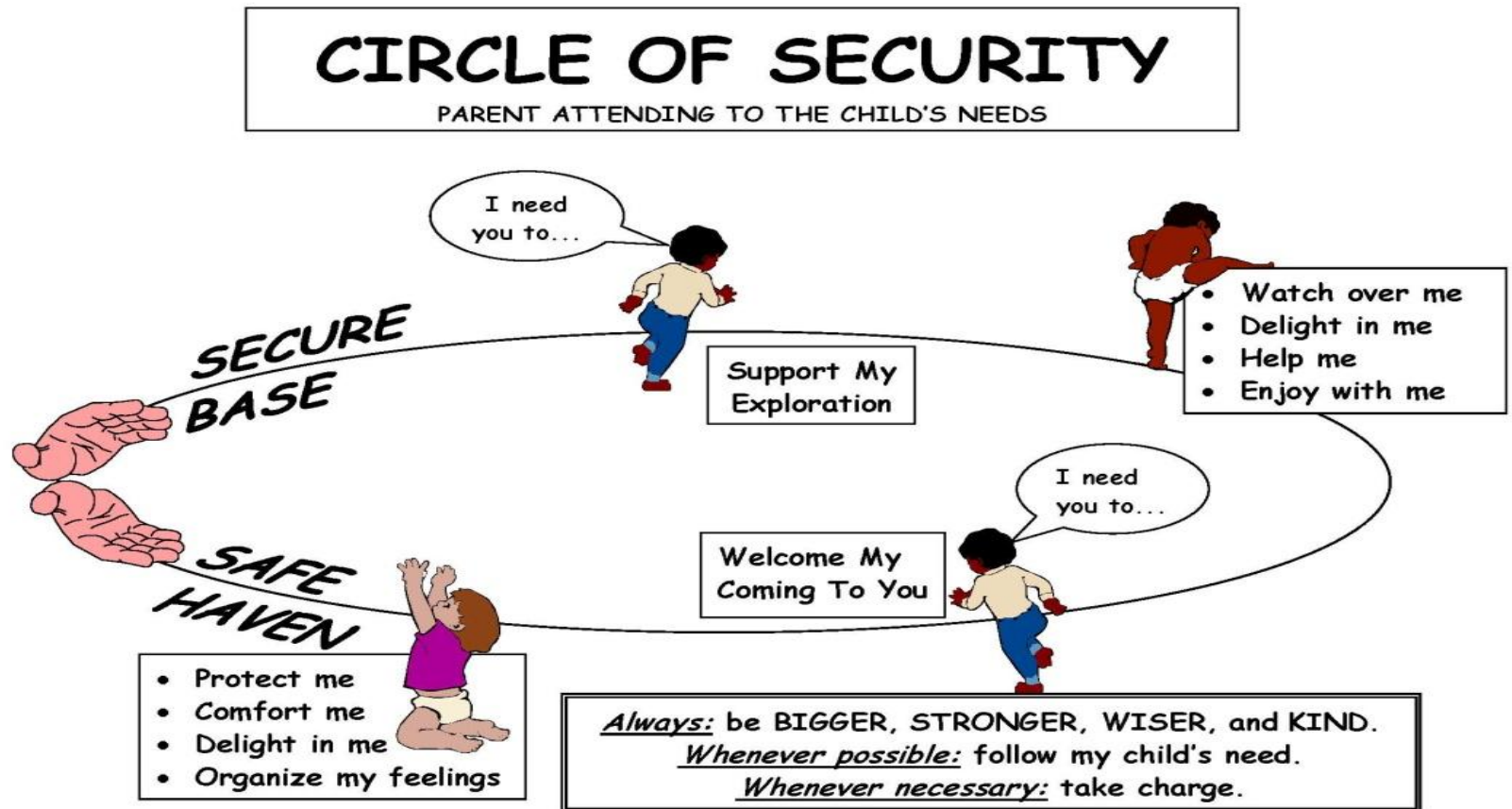
- The circle of security approach was designed to give clear choices.
- Once a parent can better understand what they are seeing, they will be able to talk about what they are doing and not yet doing to give their child the security needed to have a strong relationship with them, learn how to be a loving child and friend, and perhaps someday a loving spouse and parent.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cW2BfxsWguc>

Module 2: Exploring Our Children's Needs All the Way Around the Circle

Main goals:

- To increase the caregiver's observations and inferential skills (seeing and guessing).
- Behavioural descriptions are used to help distinguish among the "need" moments all the way around the Circle.
- To increase participant's empathy for their children's attachment needs

Our map of children's secure attachment.



We see with our minds not our eyes
– we do not see things as they are, we see
things as we are



(Almost)
***Everything I Need to Know
About Enhancing Security
in
25 Words or less***

- **Always:** be **BIGGER, STRONGER, WISER, and KIND.**
- **Whenever possible:** follow a child's need.
- **Whenever necessary:** take charge.



- Find the balance between:
firmness and affection
- When necessary:
‘take charge’
- Remember:
‘good enough parenting’
and
“it’s never too late”.

Module 3: “Being With” on the Circle

Main Goals:

- To help the caregivers see that creating a relationship with their child in which feelings can be shared helps build a solid emotional foundation for their child.
- To help children develop a healthy emotional life by allowing others to “be with” them and to learn to “be with” others.



- “**Being with**” is not a technique, rather it is a ‘state of mind’ or an underlying attitude of empathy for their children.
- Where distraction from emotional distress has been used as a coping strategy, “being with” can feel risky and anxiety provoking for many carers.
- Children only learn how to regulate intense emotions with their caregiver’s assistance to help organize these feelings.
- <https://vimeo.com/145329119>

- The research indicates that it is enough to be with and hold your child's feelings 30% of the time to form secure attachments.



Module 4: Being with Infants on the Circle

- This chapter focuses on demonstrating that all people, including babies, require relationships and that this is a dynamic process.
- The aim is to teach caregivers a simple form of attunement to children's shifts in attention and emotion.

“Feeling OK/Not Ok” – “Going out/Coming in”

Research indicates that 'delight' in baby's exploration' leads to:

- more cooperative 2 year olds;
- speeds up brain growth in the foundation of self esteem;
- assists in learning language;
- builds a deeper, loving and supportive connection.

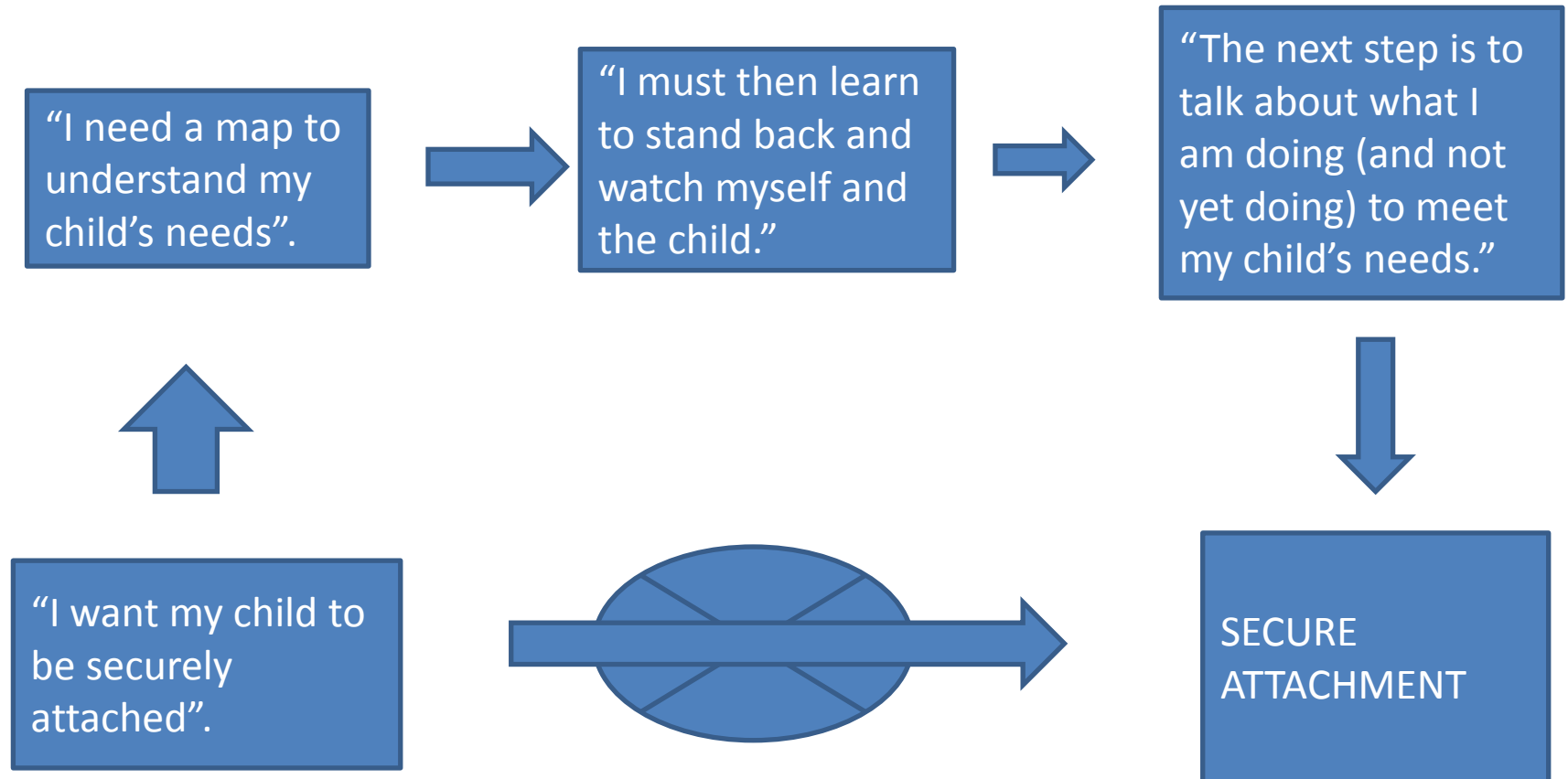


<https://vimeo.com/217075957>

Module 5: The Path to Security

- This chapter turns the focus from the child to the caregiver.
- It exposes the caregiver's vulnerability.
- Facilitators need to know when their own 'Shark Music' is activated by the caregiver's response.
- The caregivers ability to self-reflect, know their own emotions, thoughts and behaviours; and their ability to trust others will be varied.

The Path to Security





Limited Circles:

- Limited top of circle:
difficulty letting our children separate from us
to go out to explore.
- Limited bottom of circle:
being uncomfortable with closeness.

Solution: Reflection.

<https://vimeo.com/217072301>

Module 6: Exploring Our Struggles

The Hands:

Our children need us to be balance – bigger, stronger, wiser and kind.

Limited Hands shows up in three different ways:

- Bigger and stronger without kind = mean (frightening for child)
- Kind without bigger and stronger
= weak
(frightening for child – no protection)
- Gone - repeatedly being absent in a way that leaves the child living in fear that there is no one to turn to (alcohol/substance abuse and neglect) – leads to a feeling of abandonment and unable to cope.



- Firm, no nonsense kindness teaches our children trust.
- Mean, weak, and gone teaches our children fear.
- ‘Shark music’ can cause a caregiver to lose the balance between Bigger, Stronger, Wiser, and Kind.
- Reflection is the key.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6DhnbqRAOo>



Module 7: Rupture and Repair in Relationships

- A way of being rather than a series of techniques.
- It is the quality of the relationship and ability to repair.
- The task is to hear and respond to the message.

- Persistent misbehaviour is not the first choice.
- The child's first choice is behaviour that allows them to feel our support and connection.
- Children persistently misbehave when appropriate behaviour is not getting through to us.

Rupture



- Security means that our children know they can trust us to be the Hands on the Circle.
- When we fall short of that by not being available on the Circle, this is a rupture in the relationship.
- Blame is a common source of rupture.

Repair

- If we hold a sense of our child as 'good' even though they are acting out to get some need met, we are seeing our child, not our 'Shark Music'.
- Repair is letting your child know you are there, that you know what they need from you and you will work this out.

Repair continued

Three steps to repair:

- Recognise the rupture (recognise the triggers).
- Time Out for us when needed (to self-soothe and calm).
- Time In for our children.



Module 8: Summary and Celebration

- Celebrate how much the caregivers have learned.
- Summarize and answer questions.
- Give the caregivers an opportunity to debrief their experience.
- Present Certificate of Attendance for Caregivers

<https://vimeo.com/122770192>



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Recommended Books

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